A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE SYNOD

OF THE

DIOCESE OF QUEBEC,

MARCH 4th, 1863;

BY

THE REVD. JAMES WILLIAMS, M. A.,

PROFESSOR OF BELLES LETTRES IN BISHOP'S COLLEGE,
AND RECTOR OF THE JUNIOR DEPARTMENT.

QUEBEC:

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"Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths."
JER. vi, v. 16.

"It is evident to all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' times there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons."* Such is the authoritative declaration of our church; and I have thought that some illustration of this fundamental principle of her polity, in so far as it relates to the first of the forenamed offices, would not, in the present conjuncture, be either irrelevant or inappropriate. But if any of you, my brethren, should think that this place might more worthily to-day be filled by one better skilled to advise with you touching the grave duties we are met to discharge, that his opinion can excite no surprise; and, in truth, it is not very different from my own. It should seem that the Church—come together to choose one that he may discharge the high and sacred function of a Bishop—assembled here in God's Holy House, to assure herself by the blessed Communion of His body and His blood, of the perpetual presence and presidency of her Great Head; and to invoke His sanction, and His guidance, in this the day of her sore perplexity—might most fitly be addressed by some one from among you, competent to instruct, and to advise, and so to steer our ark in safety through the shoals and straits of a course now for a

* Preface to the Ordination Services.

long time disused. Most sincerely do I disclaim the assumption of any such authority—most unaffectedly do I shrink from a task altogether beyond the reach and the warrant of my slender attainments. Indeed, I could not bring myself to declare my mind before you, did I not feel that we are bound together by no common tie—were I not supported by the instinctive anticipation of your candid construction, your considerate forbearance,—the fruit of that loving-kindness, which is the grace and the charm, the badge and the bond, of the brotherhood of Christ. Since, however, I am so supported, I will proceed to state, in my plain way, what I conceive to have been the primitive use of the Church in the appointment of her Bishops.

The first thing, then, which I have to observe is, that the office of a Bishop is of Apostolical institution. I do not mean the name, but the thing. I know that in Holy Scripture the terms Bishop and Priest are used without that distinction which now prevails; and I know that the chief pastor was often called by other names; but this I maintain, that there ever was in each church, one in rank above his fellows, to whom, and to whom alone, were committed certain powers—more especially the power of ordination.

It so happened that the term Bishop came, in very early time, to be reserved exclusively for the forementioned chief officers of the church. It was not their only Title, but it was their own: was applied to none besides them. "What," says St. Jerome, in his letter to Enagrius. "What does a Bishop do which a Priest may

not do—*except ordination?*" Bishops, says Chrysostom,* are superior to Presbyters in power of ordination alone, and in this one respect only they seem to surpass Presbyters. These passages, (especially when we take into consideration their disparaging drift) would afford incontestible proof of the antiquity of the office; but I cite them only in evidence of the appropriation of the term. I only ask you to conclude from them that in the time of Jerome and Chrysostom, the Priest who ordained was called Bishop, that being the recognised designation by which he was distinguished from other Priests who had not such power. Though it would not be too much, perhaps, to ask you to infer, that those well-informed men were not able to point to the time when it had been otherwise; since the drift of their argument would have induced them, had they known such time, to state it. When, therefore, in the writings of the fathers, we meet with the term Bishop, we are to understand by it *that one* of the Presbyters, (whatever might be his other functions, or by whatever other name he might be sometimes designated)—who alone had power to ordain.

And with this understanding we may approach the discussion of what is called the Apostolical succession of our Bishops. Though the term is not a very happily chosen one; since in one sense, and that a very important sense, the Apostles had, and could have, no successors. As eye-witnesses to the facts of the Redemption—as Founders of the Church—they had, and could have, no successors. But as depositaries of the commission in virtue of which men

* Hom. XI. in 1. Tim. iii, 5.

might be sent to preach the word and to administer the sacraments they had, and could not but have, successors. It is not from identity of office, but from authenticity of commission, that the Episcopal is rightly called the Apostolical succession. The powers entrusted to Bishops might have been entrusted to others; but they were not.

We are naturally thrown back here upon some historical recital, for the question is a simple question of fact. Our Church rests upon a historical basis. The body of our doctrine is no discovery, to be perfected by the advancement of science, and rehabilitated, from time to time, for adaptation to the enlightened progress of the age! It was a revelation, whole and complete: it is a deposit, handed on from age to age. The Church which keeps and transmits this deposit is no politic invention. It is the heritage which has come down to us in unbroken line from the Apostles of Christ. Which statement involves two assertions:—First, that the Government of the Church by Bishops, such as we have it, was of Apostolical institution; and, secondly, that the succession of Bishops has been duly derived to us in conformity with that institution. Now, the first of these propositions I take to be proved by the fact that in the times immediately succeeding the Apostles, the Church was governed by Bishops: that mode of government which, departing, they left behind them we may well call of their institution. We may read their purpose in their act. And we ground our belief in this historical continuity of the office, from the statements of those who were contemporary, and personally acquainted, with the men appointed by the Apostles; in the review of whose

testimony the care ever had in the Church for the legitimate transmission of the Episcopal commission will so appear as to make it less necessary to labour in proof of the second statement relating to the legitimacy of the Anglican succession; more particularly, since the only serious exception taken to that legitimacy has been so triumphantly rebutted*; and has, in fact been tacitly abandoned. The circumstances, however, of the controversy once existing on the subject, remind me, before I proceed further, to make an observation of a general nature, which is, at the existence of a "known conspicuous public institution," such as that of Episcopacy, is its own evidence:—that, if its historical continuity be denied, the burden of proof lies with the objector, who is bound to show when, and where, the break occurred; since, if it has occurred, it can be shewn. The office is of such a public nature—so many are in every case interested in the choice of a successor—that any infraction of the known conditions of a legitimate appointment could not pass unnoticed, could not pass without an uproar. We find the great condition to be Episcopal Ordination, and we believe it was never otherwise. The impossibility, however, of such a change in the constitution of the Church as the institution of the Episcopate at a time subsequent to the Apostles, with no historical notice of the fact, will presently appear, when we come to estimate the testimony of St. Jerome.

But in entering upon this discussion, I must crave your indulgence. You, my Reverend Brethren, may think me

* Bramhall Works, v. iii. Consecration of Protestant Bishops vindicated.—Lingard.

tedious, when I bring forward passages to you already trite and familiar; whilst some perhaps of you, my Brethern of the Laity, not specially instructed in this kind of learning may possibly think me pedantic, when I obtrude these old writers upon you. But what would you have? Christianity is history. Our religion is not a philosophical system,—is not the creation of the mind—is not the growth of sentiment. It is a great fact,—based upon facts. And these facts are to be accepted, or rejected, not by the "verifying faculty" (which is but a fine coat on a beggar's back: this verifying faculty, with which the new Philosopher so delights to operate, being when looked into neither more nor less than personal caprice, or individual conceit) —these facts are to be judged not by the "verifying faculty," but by the laws of evidence, and the rules of proof. I crave then your indulgence. You who are disposed to think this way of reasoning dry and dull, consider that in this case "Evidence is before eloquence;" and you, who, versed in the writings of the Fathers, and of our English Divines, have long ago examined the witnesses to be produced, be not impatient, if I call one or two of them into court again. My citations shall not be many. Passing over Ignatius I shall produce the testimony of Irenæus who was personally acquainted with Polycarp, the disciple of St. John. I shall next quote from Tertullian, who was contemporary with Irenæus in his youth, and with Cyprian in his old age; and Cyprian, bishop of Cartnage in the middle of the third century. I shall then refer to Eusebius, whose life connects the third with the fourth century; and so pass on to Augustine, and Jerome, who,

born about the time of Eusebius' death, overlived the first quarter of the fifth century; supplementing their testimony with one or two pregnant facts. And this chain of authorities will cover the ground, I suppose, wherein one would be disposed to look for traces of Primitive usage.

* Irenæus then says of Polycarp that he was appointed by the Apostle to be Bishop of Smyrna—that he himself knew him, and had seen him. Nor does he confine his testimony to this single case. He testifies to the fact that Apostolical appointment was then the rule in all the churches. "We can reckon those, he says, who were appointed Bishops by the Apostles in the churches and their successors down to our own times," So said Irenæus living in France. Tertullian, who, living in Africa, must have been about seventeen years of age when Irenæus was made Bishop, is no less explicit † "If any" (i. e. the heretics) "should dare," he writes, "to tack themselves on to the apostolic age, that so they may seem of Apostolical Institution, because they lived under the Apostles; let them produce the origin of their churches —let them unfold the order of their Bishops, running down through their successions from the beginning, in such manner that their first Bishop may have some one of the Apostles, or of the Apostolical men, who must have persevered with the Apostles, for his predecessor, and ordainer; for in this manner the Apostolical churches report their annals. We next come to Tertullian's countryman and contemporary, Cyprian, who

* Lib. III C. 3.

† De Prescript. 32.

says that Bishops are ‡ "by vicarious ordination successors to the Apostles." After him Eusebius, whose youth is of the third, and whose mature age of the fourth century, traces, with the sedulous and critical investigation of a professed historian the descent of the Bishops in the four chief churches from the Apostles' times to his own. And Augustine, born about 14 years after Eusebius' death, declares of the Christian Society, that it § "is diffused with legitimate propagation over the world, through the Apostolical sees and successions of Bishops;" whilst Jerome, in his catalogue of Ecclesiastical writers, notes of Polycarp, that he was made Bishop of Smyrna by St. John.

Not to weary you, I have contented myself with single citations from each of these Fathers; but the number might be multiplied almost without limit. They are but specimens of the consentient voice of Christian antiquity. And if any one should feel disposed to think slightingly of Patristic Testimony, I would remind him that the authority of the Fathers upon points of doctrine, and opinion, is one thing, upon matters of fact another. It may be that their teaching upon points of doctrine is entitled to some consideration, it is unquestionable that they are competent witnesses in regard to those facts which were of public notoriety in their time. And I would observe, that it is upon the veracity—the historical credibility of these very men that the authenticity of the sacred scriptures depends; their evidence failing, you are thrown back, for the reason of the

‡ Ep. 66. Bibliotheca Patrum; Tauchnitz.

§ Ep. 42.

hope that is in you, upon the broken reed of your "verifying faculty."

I am aware, indeed, that St. Jerome has been supposed to hold different language concerning the Apostolical succession. In his * commentary upon the Epistle to Titus, he says that after men began to account those whom they baptized their own disciples, rather than Christ's, it was decreed *in the whole world* that one chosen from the Presbyters should be placed over the rest to have the entire charge of the church." Aye, but when was this decree made, and by whom? That is the point. The well known canon of criticism laid down by Augustine will elucidate this matter. It is a sound principle of reasoning; and is thus stated in his treatise of Baptism against the Donatists.—"That which is held by the *whole church* without having been ordained in any council, must have come down from the Apostles." Now to apply this, Jerome says, "It was decreed in the whole world, but it certainly was decreed in no council; therefore it must have come down from the Apostles. It was decreed in no council, I say; for the councils are well remembered, but not a word of such an one! so multitudinous in the concourse of churches!—so momentous in the world-wide revolution it effected!! The change then, if change there were, must have been an Apostolic Institution: the noiseless substitution of an improved order for one not found to work well, effected in the Apostles' life time, and by their authority. And that

* Tom. IX. 245, Paris
De Bapt. Cont. Donat. L. IV. 24.

this is what Jerome meant, the passage I have already quoted from his writings is sufficient to shew, wherein he recognizes the existence of Bishops from Apostles' times in continual succession: as he does, too, in other places—under the name of Ignatius,* for instance, in the same catalogue, whom he states to be the third Bishop of Antioch from St. Peter.

But it may be urged, that these cases, though to the point, are not conclusive—that they record the beliefs of well informed men indeed, but still of particular men—that others may have thought otherwise. It may be said, that they want universality—(not of statement but of authority) that it is the exception which proves the rule. "Was," it may be asked, "was this doctrine ever called in question? and if so, what was the answer to the challenge"? In that answer we shall have, not the private fancies, and peculiar predilections, of particular men, but the true tones of public opinion—in that answer he shall read catholic principles and catholic practice. Well, then, there was in Armenia, somewhere about the middle of the fourth century, one Aërius, who did say, unequivocally, that Bishops were no more than Priests. And this his opinion* was only broached to be scouted. This was the exceptional theory. Exceptional practice led to a like result. There was one Colluthus at Alexandria, who, not being a Bishop, took upon him to ordain Presbyters; and his

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* Tom. 1, 273.

* Epiphanius L. III de Hæres. 75, Bp. Hall X. 237. Augustine de Hæres. I. 53. Bilson Perp. Gov. of the church, chap. xiii.

Priest was forthwith, for that very reason deposed, by the Synod of the church.*

Not to be longer tedious, I will sum up in the words of so great a reasoner, and so good a Protestant, as Chillingworth. "When I shall, therefore, see all the fables in the metamorphosis acted, and proved true stories; when I shall see all the democracies and aristocracies in the world lie down to sleep and awake into monarchies; then will I begin to believe that Presbyterial government, having continued in the Church during the Apostles times, should, presently after, against the Apostles doctrine and will of Christ, be whirled about like a scene in a masque, and transformed into episcopacy. In the mean time, while these things remain thus incredible, and in human reason impossible, I hope I shall have leave to conclude thus: that Episcopal government is acknowledged to have been received in the Church presently after the Apostles times. Between the Apostles times and this presently after, there was not time enough for, nor possibility of, so great an alteration. And therefore there was no such alteration. And therefore Episcopacy being confessed to be so ancient and so catholic, must be granted also to be Apostolic."*

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* Athanasius, quoted by Bingham, I. 87, where the few other cases occurring, always with like results, may be seen.

* Chillingworth's Works, vol. ii, p. 490.

The following remarks, taken from an address lately delivered by Canon Stowell, at Bath, will show that there is now, as at all times, a substantial unity of principle amongst Churchmen of all shades of sentiment.

"But making all deduction, and allowance, for my part, my conviction is so strong of Episcopal ordination being the appointed method, the external method, of God's designation of ministers of religion in his Church, that I should not feel myself empowered to exercise the functions of a minister, had I not been Episcopally ordained."— Speech of Canon Stowell.

But, being of Apostolic institution, is it of perpetual observance? This is a question which, happily, we need not discuss. We have the succession, and we mean to hold it. We do not judge others, but we will walk in the old paths. Believing, with the learned Bromhall, that "if any churches through necessity, or ignorance, or new-fangledness, have swerved from the Apostolical rule, and primitive institution, the Lord may pardon them, and supply the defect of man; but that we must not therefore, presume that it is charity to think well of our neighbors, and good divinity to look well to ourselves."* We have the succession and we mean to hold it; we will not discuss, then, the case of others, but proceed in the next place to examine into the primitive manner of appointing Bishops.

We are agreed that none but a Bishop can ordain a Bishop. But who is to designate the man to be so ordained? The practice in the ancient Church fluctuated no doubt; but it is not difficult to note precedents of authority. Cyprian, describing the election of Cornelius, says that he was made Bishop among other conditions, by the "testimony" of the Clergy and the "suffrage" of the people,* which mode of appointment he asserts in the same letter to be of scriptural authority, and the general practice of the Church. And Socrates, the historian, describing the election of Chrysostom, which must have happened in his youth, or only just before, distinctly asserts that "he was chosen by the common vote of all, both clergy and laity."*

* Works, vol. iii, p. 475.
* Epist. 67. Tauchnitz.
* Lib. vi, c. 2.

Cœlestinus says, "let no Bishop be imposed upon the unwilling";* and by the unwilling he explains himself to mean the clergy and the people.

These testimonies are sufficient, I think, to shew that the primitive use in the best ordered Churches was for the clergy and people to unite in the election of their Bishop. He was to be chosen by themselves: and he was to be one of themselves. Cyprian, Celestinus, Hilary, and Leo, as quoted by Bingham, all insist strongly upon this. And it may be that they were right. It may be that Dioceses are not fragments; that the branches of the True Vine are no truncated logs, but vital shoots, all complete with germ and bud. It may be that in the true idea of a Diocese a Bishop is no exotic. But, in the application of this principle to our particular case, it may be said that we shall avoid the disturbances incident to a popular election by abdicating our functions and placing the appointment in other hands. It may be urged in reply that the throes of parturition are healthier than the quiescence of sterility. It may be said, that we shall avoid personalities by selecting a stranger. But some may think it as well, perhaps, to bear those ills we have as to fly to others that we know not of. It may be said, that we shall get a better man by selecting from a larger field. It may be replied, that we are not in search of a man for our convenience, but of a principle by which the Church may live and thrive. These are questions forced upon us by the occasion, and upon which, therefore, I have been constrained lightly to touch, so as to present their opposite sides to your view; which however I have no

* Bingham I. 440.

intention to discuss, but of which the synod is now called upon to find a practical solution.

One other point there is to which, though it come not within the strict scope of our deliberations, I shall advert in passing, since it forms the natural complement of the foregoing sketch of primitive practice: The fact, namely, that the Bishop was of old, by the law and custom of the Church, to be consecrated in his own Cathedral, in the presence of his own people; as appears, (1) from the ruling of Cyprian who says * that for the due celebration of ordination the nearest Bishops of the Province must assemble amongst the people for whom a Bishop is to be ordained and there proceed in the presence of the people; and (2) from the Practice of St. Augustine, who, when he erected a new Bishopric, sent for the Primate of Numidia to come from a long distance, that he might ordain the new Bishop in his own see. These, my Brethren, are the old paths, to explore which I have thought it more becoming, than to obtrude upon you any opinions of my own.

I have spoken of the office: I would say one word of the man to fill the office. What manner of man a Bishop ought to be, we may gather from St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, and to Titus, who seem, from the evidence of those letters to have been charged, at Ephesus and Crete respectively, with duties analogous to those of him who was in after times called a Bishop. And we, my brethren, have this privilege—that not only do we read the Apostle's Epistles in the deadness of the letter but we have beheld the same, embodied as it were in him who was indeed

(1) Ep. 67. Tauchnitz.
(2) Ep. 261. Bened.

a living Epistle known and read of all men. We may learn what manner of man a Bishop ought to be from what we have known of him, who, with the chastened fervour of his cultured eloquence, and with the more constraining power of his holy life, preached, from this place, the Everlasting Gospel so long, so faithfully, and so well—of him who was so conspic ous an example—conspicuous not more by the height of his place, than by the christian courtesy of his gentle bearing; and the beautiful type of his clear transparent piety—so conspicuous an example of that "pure religion, and undefiled before God, and the Father, which is to visit the fatherless and the widows, in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world"—of him who, an earnest and uncompromising upholder of the faith once delivered to the saints, was no harsh nor censorious judge of men—of him who having fought a good fight and finished his course, and kept the faith, is gone—henceforth to wear the crown laid up for him—of him who having, through many a long year, "allured to brighter worlds," has "led the way:"—who has passed from among us; but whose memory lives, and will live, still suggesting

> "The tender grace of a day that is dead;"

Awakening oft, in many an old friend's heart, regretful wish for

> "The touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still."

To have known him is to know what manner of man a Bishop ought to be.

He should be a holy man. He who sits in that chair must not frustrate his teaching by the inconsistency of his

life. He should be a zealous man, for his is not a work that can be slackly done. He must be a learned man, for the Priest's lips should keep knowledge: learned in the Holy Scriptures, they are the oracles of God: learned in all the wisdom of the theologians, for if his trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle. But this is not all. It is required of a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, that he bring forth things old and new,—that he be conversant in the past history of that human mind, to the diseases of which he undertakes to minister—that he be alert to observe, and prompt to meet the tendencies of modern thought. In the harassment of their sceptical perplexities—a growing trouble—men look to find in him one who knows something of what they feel:—Who can move amid the ever shifting subtleties of thought with the firm step of one who, having himself traversed the perilous path knows the deep water from the shallow—who can distinguish the doubts of the earnest from the aberrations of the wilful. He must be a godly and a well learned man, with nothing contracted, nothing little, in his understanding or his culture. His mind should be nurtured upon the great thoughts of great men, that the largeness of his sympathy, and the many-sidedness of his character may afford points of contact for the varied minds with which he has to deal. But again, he is not merely the Chief of the Pastors, he is the Governor of the Church. And the due discharge of that office implies the possession of powers wholly different from those of a learned or an eloquent man; that combination indeed of moral and intellectual qualities which makes a wise administrator; that ripeness of judgment—that union

of promptitude with discretion—of decision with forbearance, which commonly goes by the unpretending name of good sense, though less showy, is not less valuable, or less rare, than the capacity for eloquence, or the taste for erudition. And this is a qualification most needful for a Bishop ; who stands, too, in a very peculiar relation to his Clergy,—Priests like himself with the same vows upon them—men like himself, with like passions, and like frailties, of whom he is sometimes the judge, always the adviser, and the friend. A delicate combination of duties which he cannot, with any sufficiency discharge, unless he be a man quick in sympathy—of a large and liberal heart.

You may well ask, who is sufficient for these things ? Truly, no man—as man. But by the Grace of God's Holy Spirit he may be sufficient. A wise and understanding heart is the gift of God—and the large, and the loving heart is a great gift, which God bestows for great uses. Our part is to discern these tokens of the Divine designation. And I would to God, my brethren, that we could in this emergency rise above the pettiness of party ! I would to God that we could rid our minds of our badges and our shibboleths and all such factious folly. That we would ask of a man—not " Is he high ?" or, " Is he low ?" " Is he of Paul ?" or, " Is he of Apollos ?" but, " Is he of Jesus ?" We need not surrender our principles, but we need not require of every man that he should contract himself to our tastes. Where we find the love of Christ, there surely, surely, we may venture to recognize a brother. What else do we want ? It is the love of Christ that extends and enlarges—it is the love of Christ that knits

and compacts, His Church! It is not by segregating ourselves into cliques and coteries, that we shall advance the kingdom of our Master. It is not by standing afar off, and thanking God that we are not as yon poor publican our neighbour, that we shall draw down from Heaven that most excellent gift of charity, without which we are nothing worth. No, the love of Christ is nothing so exclusive: nothing so cold: so centred in self. It rests not in self conscious complacency. Oh! no! It lives by the oblation of self: a principle of life, it lives but by the death of self in the soul: a spiritual force, decomposing the fibres of iniquity—transmuting the heart's corruptness—it engenders love to souls: thinketh no evil—hopeth all things, endureth all things: never faileth. It knits brother to brother in one spirit, one body, one hope. It melts the hardness of nature. It fuses the contrariety of private opinion into the unity of the catholic faith. The mould of order and the bond of peace, it designates, as with tongue of fire, the Heaven appointed ruler of the church.

Oh! that thou, Almighty Father, in whose name we are gathered together, wouldest pour now into our hearts that love which knows its like! Oh! that thou, Spirit of truth, who proceedest from the Father, wouldest guide now our judgment! Oh! that thou, Eternal Son, who art the Head of thy church, wouldest preside now at our counsels, and direct our choice!

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